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SCHAKOWSKY CALLS HOUSE ACTION ON ELECTION REFORM A MEANINGFUL STEP FOR VOTERS WITH DISABILITIES

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today joined her colleagues in supporting an important measure to help ensure that persons with disabilities have full access to the polls and can vote privately and independently. The House of Representatives passed a motion to instruct its members on the election reform conference committee to accept the stronger Senate language requiring states to maintain voting systems that are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Below is Schakowsky's statement.

"Following the 2000 elections, millions of voters looked to Congress for leadership. Americans demanded that we take steps to ensure that what happened on that November day will never take place again, and that no voter will ever again be denied the right to vote.

"As Vice Chair of the Democratic Caucus Special Committee on Election Reform, I traveled the nation with leaders on this issue, including U.S. Representatives Maxine Waters, Steny Hoyer, and Alcee Hastings, listening and learning from voters in Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Jacksonville and other cities. What we heard from elderly and young voters, people of color, and persons with disabilities was clear: Without national minimum election standards and a commitment of federal dollars, voters will continue to be disenfranchised and history is doomed to repeat itself

"That is why today's action by the House to instruct its conferees to accept the stronger Senate language is a crucial step to improving voting accessibility to the 46 million voting-aged Americans with disabilities.

"Persons with disabilities face unique barriers, from physical access to polling places to lack of confidentiality while making candidate selection. The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities, a national coalition which includes the American Association of People with Disabilities, the American Council of the Blind, Council for Learning Disabilities, National Rehabilitation Association, Paralyzed Veterans of America, United Cerebral Palsy, support this effort and the Senate provisions that would allow persons with disabilities, including those who are blind or visually impaired, to vote privately and independently.

"Every effort that moves the process forward and helps bring us closer to meaningful election reform is substantial. Since November 2000, voters have waited patiently, but time is running out, and so are the voters' patience."